

Clearinghouse extends lifelines to needy

By Bob Sklar
staff writer

Whether it's finding boots for the kids, paying a past-due utility bill or aiding an elderly couple evicted from their apartment, Neighborhood House wants to help.

"We're a very vital part of our community," Neighborhood House executive director Cheryl Carter told the Farmington/Farmington Hills Chamber of Commerce board

of directors July 20.

"We're here to cut through the red tape in finding food, clothing, medicine, shelter, furnishings, financial aid — whatever a person might need during a hardship."

Neighborhood House matches local residents in need with appropriate services and agencies. It's a



Cheryl Carter

clearinghouse born from the frustration of volunteer groups like the Goodfellows and the Salvation Army.

Make no mistake about it, Carter said, not everyone who calls Farmington or Farmington Hills home lives in a \$200,000 house.

Since last June, Neighborhood House has assisted 750 individuals. Reasons vary: layoff, fire, unemployment, separation.

"Do they give up food, rent or utilities? Of all things people usually give up on when in a bind is insurance," Carter said. "They think nothing will happen and think they can pick it up when they're back on their feet. Then something does happen and they're wiped out."

CARTER ADDRESSED the chamber in hopes of rallying business support for the 1-year-old coordinating agency. "I'm here to let you know we're here," she said. "We turn down no donations."

Only \$100 of its \$700 a month

budget goes toward administrative costs, said Carter, the only salaried employee.

She won't guarantee immediate results, but Carter says Neighborhood House is building a steady record of extending lifelines to the needy. "We tap into as many resources as possible," she said.

Among the clearinghouse's biggest boosters are the Farmington Area Goodfellows, Farmington Public Schools, the Salvation Army, local churches and area shelters.

Neighborhood House operates

rent-free from the Salvation Army, at Inkster and Shilawsee in Farmington Hills. Hours are 9 a.m. to noon and 1-4 p.m. Monday-Wednesday. Call 478-7699 or 477-1153.

Carter has two regular volunteers. More will be sought this fall to help distribute food, clothing and gifts and to answer the phone during the holiday season.

"Everybody should come here to work one day during the holiday season to see what Christmas is really all about," Carter said.

New vet on board

Dr. Christine O'Rourke will become an associated at The Plaza Veterinary Hospital in Farmington.

She is replacing Dr. Karen Kuhl who left private practice to accept a residency in Veterinary Dermatology at the University of Pennsylvania.

O'Rourke graduated from Clarkston High School in Clarkston, Michigan in 1982. She attended Michigan State University, majoring in physiology until being accepted in the College of Veterinary Medicine at Michigan State University in 1985.

As a veterinary student, O'Rourke was student chapter president of the Association for Women Veterinarians, a student member of the American Veterinary Medical Association and of the Association for Avian Veterinarians.

She has held a special interest in working with avian species and other exotic pets. O'Rourke was also active in organizing a visiting pet program for the elderly.

She received her degree in veterinary medicine from Michigan State University in June.

O'Rourke lives in Plymouth.



C. O'Rourke

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